DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 137 EA 019 055

AUTHOR McCary, C. E., III
TITLE Organized Parents as Allies in School Improvement. Draft.
PUB DATE Nov 86
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (15th, Memphis, TN, November 19-21, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Change Agents; Change Strategies; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Education; Institutional Characteristics; *Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Parent Teacher Association; School Culture

ABSTRACT

The results of a case study in an elementary school indicate that parents can effectively support school improvement efforts even in schools with characteristics identified in previous research as inimical to change. Administrators, teachers, and parents were interviewed about the impact of a five-part plan developed by the school's parent teacher association. The plan called for (1) awarding grants to teachers for trying new practices, (2) holding a schoolwide student awards program, (3) supporting increased use of computers in instruction, (4) continuing a publicly recognized exploratory program suggested by the principal, and (5) sponsoring social functions at which teachers could be recognized. From the literature, researchers developed a list of change variables whose impact on the PTA-initiated change process could be assessed through interviews. These variables included school culture, power and control, the clarity of the proposed changes, teacher participation, the degree of collaborative planning involved, the presence of support activities and training, the change's impact on teacher efficacy, the school's team spirit, and instructional leadership. This report reviews the literature, cites the critical incidents in the change process, assesses the impact of each variable, and summarizes the factors responsible for the effectiveness of the PTA effort. (PGD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED277137

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. E. McCary, III

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DRAFT
(Not for citation without permission of the author)

# ORGANIZED PARENTS AS ALLIES IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

C. E. McCary III

Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Leadership (CASEL)

Peabody College of Vanderbilt University

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association in Memphis, Tennessee, November 1986

EA 019 055

## INTRODUCTION

Recent research on effective schools (Purkey and Smith, 1985) and school improvement (Fullan, 1985; McLaughlin and March, 1979) recommends how principals or other change agents might successfully implement changes which will make schools more effective. However, these studies do not suggest how and under what circumstances parents might become involved as allies in efforts to implement change. New principals may face circumstances which are less than ideal for implementing change. Principals may lack adequate power to make school improvement a priority when the established school culture is not supportive of improvement, and when explicit district support for school improvement is lacking. This study investigates parent-supported change efforts under such circumstances to generate both practical implications and questions for further research concerning how parents can help schools improve.

### Focus of the case

The case analysis examines the effectiveness of a year-long plan developed by a PTA in support of the principal's efforts and parental concerns for school improvement. The plan had five major components:

1) an innovative teaching "mini-grants" program to award funds to teams of teachers to try out new practices,
2) a school-wide student awards program,
3) funds for hardware, software, training and support activities to continue implementing microcomputers into instruction,
4) continuation of a publicly recognized exemplary exploratory program originally suggested by the principal
5) opportunities to publicly recognize teachers through a Teacher Appreciation breakfast, a "Homecoming" celebration for former teachers and students, and a retirement party.

The mini-grant provision sparked passive and then active resistance from members of the faculty, which was countered by the PTA board, principal and a "rebel" group of faculty who applied for a grant.

One measure of the plan's effectiveness is the results achieved after one year, and whether the PTA-sponsored plan contributed to the results. A second indicator is whether the processes used to develop and implement the plan helped create conditions in the school favorable to further school improvement efforts. Variables predicting successful change derived from research on school improvement (McLaughlin and March, 1979) were used to analyze both the results and the processes of implementing the plan to determine whether these factors can be used to explain and guide parent involvement in school improvement efforts.

Survey of Related Research

At least three types of literature are relevant to the case analysis: 1) research on school improvement, 2) research on power issues relevant to parent involvement in change efforts in schools, and 3) theories concerning the importance of culture in school change.

Studies of the process of implementing change in schools were reviewed to determine key factors affecting the success of school improvement which could be applied to the special case of parent involvement in change efforts. In their review of the Rand Corporation "Change Agent Study" of 293 Federally-funded school improvement projects, McLaughlin and March (1979) identified four sets of variables which had the greatest impact on the successful implementation of those projects. The four categories which predicted successful change were 1) institutional motivation, 2) implementation process, 3) institutional leadership, and 4) teacher characteristics.

The first category, institutional motivation, referred to the necessity

of gaining teacher commitment to proposed changes. Other studies of successful school change (Courter and Ward, 1983; Little,1981; Hall and Loucks, 1981) support the crucial importance of teacher commitment to the implementation of any proposed change. Doyle and Ponder (1977) point out that teachers usually have the power to decide whether they will actually implement a proposed instructional change. In making this decision, five factors are relevant: 1) personal cost or effort required vs. perceived benefits, 2) congruence with the teacher's personal educational philosophy, 3) the clarity and specificity of proposed changes which makes them "doable", (Doyle and Ponder, 1977), plus 4) the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, or belief that s/he can deal effectively with classroom problems, and 5) cognitive complexity, or the ability to reconceptualize teaching practice (Sparks, 1983).

McLaughlin and March (1979) argue that teacher commitment to implement a proposed change can be increased by three factors: a) the explicit, visible support of district and local administrative leadership for the change, b) teacher participation in the planning process, and c) the scope or perceived potential of the change for enhanced professional development and student achievement.

McLaughlin and March characterized the second set of crucial change variables as project implementation strategies. These included both training opportunities to learn new skills, and more importantly, training support activities. Support activities included classroom assistance, outside consultants, regular meetings and participation in decision-making. The Rand study found that skill training activities alone contributed only to short term gains in project implementation and student achievement. These short term achievements could not be sustained into longer term outcomes of permanent changes in teacher behavior and continuation of the

project practices without training support activities.

Training support activities contributed to the process of "mutual adaptation" which McLaughlin and March described as essential to successful change efforts. Mutual adaptation allows teachers to modify their concepts and practices at the same time that their experience affects the innovation. General instructional approaches thus become more "fine-tuned" and individualized to meet local conditions and individual teacher styles and needs. The mutual adaptation which occurs in training support activities helps ensure successful implementation by increasing the effectiveness of the proposed practices. It also builds teachers' sense of efficacy and commitment through collaboration in implementing the change.

Hall and Loucks (1979) point out that teachers go through stages of concern in the implementation of change. These concerns begin with minimal awareness and an initial desire for further information, but rapidly escalate into concern with how the change will affect them personally. Personal concerns include issues such as uncertainty about the demands of the innovation, his or her personal inadequacy to implement it, and the personal role changes that will be required. Only as this hurdle of personal concern passes do teachers' concerns shift into concern with learning the methodology, and finally into concern with understanding the concept behind the change and improving the innovation.

The third category of significant variables was <u>institutional leadership</u>. The two most important factors within this category were the attitude of the building principal towards the change, and the school climate relative to good working relationships, esprit de corps, and feelings about the management of the school and the school as a place to work. Other researchers have confirmed the importance of norms of

collegiality and improvement to successful change (Courter and Ward, 1983; Little, 1981). The climate or culture within the school significantly affected participation in decision making and thus the training support activities linked to changes in teacher behavior and continuation of the project.

The final set of factors predicting successful school change can be characterized as teacher characteristics. The most significant factor here, and one of the most significant overall in affecting long-term implementation, was the sense of teacher efficacy: the belief that teachers could help even the most difficult and unmotivated students. This sense of efficacy tended to be highest in projects with a high level of training support activities.

However, more experienced teachers were less likely to implement innovations. It would appear that the unique needs of more experienced teachers are more difficult to meet with undifferentiated general approaches to staff development. Teachers also vary in their cognitive complexity and conceptualization of teaching (Sparks, 1983). These differences can also affect teachers' responses to proposed changes. If initial changes are too incongruent with the teacher's present conceptualization of teaching, they may be rejected before they are understood.

The Rand study and similar research on school improvement efforts addresses the issue of resistance to change by proposing strategies for gaining teacher commitment to the proposed changes: strong district support for the change, collaborative planning and projects with enough scope to appeal to professionalism and better student achievement. However none of these studies offers much practical help to principals assigned to schools where conditions necessary for successful change are unfavorable. Given the factors predicting successful change, the following conditions should make

school improvement much more difficult:

a) lack of explicit, visible district level support for school improvement,

b) a school culture with high autonomy and low collegiality, in which teamwork and esprit de corps are lacking, and

c) highly experienced teachers whose needs for professional development would be more difficult to meet, and who are less likely to implement proposed new practices.

In his article "The Symbolism of Effective Schools", Deal (1985) points out that the logical, structural reforms advocated in the current wave of effective school reform are not enough to institutionalize more effective schools. Deal maintains that much of teaching technology and outcomes are ambiguous and cannot be precisely measured. Under these conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity cultural symbols such as ceremonies, heros and sagas provide meaning to participants in the educational process. He argues that much of the effective schools research and associated reform efforts can become much more effective if used symbolically to restore public and professional faith in schools. His recommendations for transforming school cultures into stronger, more effective organizations include the following suggestions:

a) explore and document the school's history,

b) anoint and celebrate heroes and heroines,

c) review the school's rituals,

d) build school culture through ceremonies,

e) tell good stories to revitalize the culture, and

f) strengthen rather than resist the cultural network of the school.

Deal's concept of cultural or symbolic transformation may have particular relevance to principals facing conditions adverse to school improvement. Those conditions may include a resilient school culture lacking norms of collegiality and improvement, and no visible district support for school improvement. Under these conditions, Deal's theory would lead principals to look for ways to use current strengths in the culture--history, heroes/heroines, sagas, ceremonies and rituals--both to understand the present culture and to transform its strengths into a culture supportive of improvement.

However Bolman and Deal (1984) add yet another perspective to the process of affecting school change: the importance of political issues. They define the political perspective as dealing with issues of power and control over allocating scarce resources. The primary processes of this framework are bargaining and negotiations among power coalitions. These conflict resolution processes can easily degenerate into a "street fight" with no rules and destructive consequences. Effective managers, in their view, try to arrange arenas with limits which protect individual rights while resolving important conflicts.

Given the diversity of the society and the uncertainty of educational technology, political conflict often develops in schools over appropriate educational goals and processes. Parents or other change agents advocating the need for school improvement may face organized resistance from teachers who perceive the status quo to be in their best self-interest. Parents may lack the skills necessary to know how to gain enough power to bargain for the changes they wish to see implemented.

The symbolic and political perspectives may be especially relevant to change efforts under less than ideal conditions. In particular, lack of a school culture supportive of collegiality and improvement, and lack of

specific, visible district support for school improvement may create situations in which principals have difficulty gaining commitment to proposed changes because many of the faculty simple do not see the change as important enough to warrent their time and energy. The symbolic perspective argues that symbolism, the search for meaning in events, is important in any change effort. It may be implicit in some of the variables found most important in predicting change, such as the meaning attached to activities such as collaborative planning and participation in decision making. Political issues may become more important under circumstances in which there is no perceived need for improvement. Despite the reform effort or the wishes of parents, teachers in many schools may perceive proposed changes as threats to their self-interest in the status quo. If so, a primary issue facing change agents is how to create a common awareness that change is necessary.

Although the literature discussed above has many implications for parent involvement in school change processes, there has been no evidence that general parent involvement in schools affects student achievement. A meta-analysis of the factors affecting student achievement found no evidence that general parent involvement in schools, as in parent advisory boards, PTA fundraising, or classroom tutoring, had any consistent, measurable impact on student achievement (Hawley et. al., 1983). However, the analysis did reveal considerable evidence that parent involvement in the education of their own children could significantly improve student achievement. Although one might conclude from this finding that parent involvement in school improvement beyond work with their own children had no effect, in fact there were no studies cited in which parents were directly involved in school improvement efforts.

More recent implementations of effective schools research, as in the statewide School Improvement Act in South Carolina, have mandated parent representation on school improvement councils organized in each local school. Yet there are such barriers to significant parent involvement in affecting the "core technology" of schools--how teachers actually teach--that these efforts to involve parents may become more superficial than effective. Fruchter (1984) identified five characteristics which worked against significant parental impact on how schools function: 1) economic survival pressures, 2) control of participatory structures by school personnel, 3) cultural distance between the school and community, 4) parental uncertainty about responsibility for failure, and 5) parental lack of clarity about improvement.

Yet even if the school improvement literature could suggest ways in which these barriers could be surmounted, so that parents did indeed have a more direct influence on the operation of the school, it does not necessarily follow that increased parental influence on schools would necessarily help schools improve. In fact there may be a negative side to parent involvement in school improvement. Parents could demand changes which have little to do with the characteristics associated with higher student achievement or more effective schools. For example, parents can organize politically to demand changes in curriculum consistent with their religious beliefs, as in the recent suit won by fundamentalist parents demanding alternative textbooks not offensive to their beliefs. Parents might also seek other changes, such as a return to traditional values and methods, with only a questionable link to improved student achievement.

The literature on parent involvement in combination with theories of political and symbolic change raises a fundamental issue in the governance of schools: who shall determine what is important to learn, and how it shall

be taught. Unless parents, teachers and administrators can learn to use expert knowledge in the process of creating change, it is possible that increased parent involvement in school improvement efforts could result in increased political struggle with little or even negative impact on student achievement and the culture and functioning of the school.

## DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Design

The study is based on an in-depth analysis of a single case in which a parent organization supported school improvement efforts. The case can be seen as an example of action research, in which principles derived from prior research are used to intentionally create change. The case also represents an extension and testing of school change theories beyond conditions favoring change to an environment lacking in some of those conditions. The context of the change effort was a school culture lacking norms for collegiality and improvement, and lack of district incentives and structures to explicitly support school improvement. The case examines the predicament faced by a principal and organized parent group of introducing change under such adverse conditions.

The one-sample case study does pose problems of generalizability and inferences about causality. Factors other than the conditions identified could also contribute to the results. If previous studies of change under more favorable conditions were missing, these special adverse conditions would more seriously limit the generalizability of the conclusions. The present case can be seen as a test situation to see if research-derived principles of effective change still apply under circumstances less

favorable to change, and given the special case of parent involvement in that change effort..

Lack of a control situation for comparison could lead to mistaken inferences about which factors actually contributed to change. These limitations are characteristic of qualitative research even when comparison groups are available. Prior studies provide a "control group" in that comparisons can be made between the current study and previous findings. Correlation or association can never prove causality. However, the in-depth investigation of a single case can provide meaningful hypotheses regarding the nature of effective change which can be tested in further action research.

Methodology

The variables used to analyze the change effort were derived from research on school improvement efforts and theories of political and symbolic change. This set of variables was then applied to the specific activities initiated by the PTA over a year-long period. Critical incidents in the process of implementing each activity were analyzed to determine whether conditions predicting successful school improvement were present or developed during the process of implementing the activity. Each activity was also analyzed to determine whether political or symbolic issues were evident in the implementation of the activity. A chart was developed to show the relative presense of each change variable. Patterns in this chart were then used to develop hypotheses about the process of effective change given the unique circumstances of the case.

Data collection

Critical incidents and other data used to form judgments regarding the change variables were collected by the following methods:

a) participant and non-participant observation of change processes and

results evident one year later;

b) a parent survey;

c) interviews with the principal, new PTA co-presidents, and a sample of six faculty involved in the previous year's change efforts.

Critical incidents were identified through the author's participation as PTA president during the year studied, reports from other key players during that year, plus interviews conducted one year after the changes were implemented. The problem of asking retrospective questions was mitigated by interviewing multiple sources, plus the fact that many of the change activites were continuing to occur in the present.

The non-structured interviews asked participants to reflect on their experiences with the plans proposed by the PTA, as well as how they thought other teachers responded to the proposed changes. Probing questions were asked especially about teachers' responses to the controversial innovative teaching mini-grants program, particularly why they thought there had been initial opposition, and why teachers now had recommended the program be continued. If not voluntarily expressed by the teacher, the interviewer expressed problems identified by other teachers in how new activities were implemented and asked the teacher to respond. The interviewed teachers were questioned about the following topics:

a) teachers' reactions to specific PTA sponsored activities implemented one year ago,

b) their opinions of how the changes could have been more effectively implemented,

c) any changes they had noted in teaching practices in themselves or colleagues,

d) any changes they had noted in teamwork or administration since the arrival of the new principal, and

e) any changes in instruction, student motivation or achievement which they believed were supported by the PTA-sponsored activities.

The principal helped identify the teachers to be interviewed by their reactions to the controversial innovative teaching "mini grants" proposed by the PTA. The three "factions" of teachers can be characterized as the "resistors" from the traditional school culture which vocally opposed the program, the "rebels" who volunteered to participate in it, and the "on-lookers" who did not participate or voice objections. Three "rebels", two "on-lookers" and the leader of the "resistors" were interviewed, as was the principal.

The nature of the author's involvement with the school would obviously tend to bias his conclusions and interpretations towards seeing improvement. These tendencies were countered by the focus on readily observable results reported by other participants one year later, and interviews designed to test hypotheses about the change effort. Those to be interviewed were told the purpose of the study was to help principals and parent leaders learn how parents could more effectively help schools to improve. They were asked to tell the interviewer what he needed to hear rather than what they thought he wanted to hear, since the purpose of the study was to enable principals and parents to be more effective in their future efforts to help schools improved. Probing questions included direct statements of possible problems in how change was implemented. The willingness of interviewees to express negative feelings about the processes and results of some of the change efforts tended to indicate they were reporting valid data.

Given the purpose of the study, to generate further action and research from an analysis of parent involvement school change under adverse

conditions, the actions taken by the author and other participants actually adds to understanding the change process. Actions taken to create change produced reactions and results which help identify the forces affecting school improvement. The presense of multiple change agents besides the author, including the principal, other board members and chairpersons, and new co-presidents in the year the interviews were conducted, helped generalize change strategies beyond specific individuals.

The intense study of a single case also adds exceptional richness of detail to the process of change, especially perceptions of participants involved in making change and being affected by it. As opposed to more structured observational techniques, it allows the unusual key events, stories and culture of the school to emerge and add to our understanding of the change processes involved.

## BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

### Context

The elementary school involved in this project opened in the late 1950's to serve a predominantly white, middle-class suburban neighborhood. Over the last 15 years, the metropolitan school district went through a protracted desegregation suit resulting in one of the most extensive busing plans in the nation. Another long-standing neighborhood school in the area was closed four years ago, and the school now serves several similar white, middle-class neighborhoods in the suburb, plus approximately a 20% minority enrollment bused from the inner city. These students total approximately 325 in grades K through 4, plus two classes of hearing-impaired students and one special education class. Out of fourteen full-time teachers, almost

three-fourths had been at the school more than five years, and five had been there almost from the time the school had opened more than 20 years ago.

Norms against parent involvement in decision making

For 27 years since its opening the school had had only one principal. During the latter years of his administration the school became as noted for the lack of parent involvement as the closed school had been for the opposite. Teachers who taught during this time have reported that the principal and many of the faculty did not want parents in the building or classrooms, other than fund-raising or PTA meetings. The number of parents who could attend special school functions was limited to 25. One parent reported that he refused permission for her to observe the first grade class her son would attend as a new student the next year. Parents who had been actively involved in the closed school reported that they felt their involvement was far less welcomed by the principal and faculty in their "new" school, although their expectations for involvement apparently resulted in a more visible parent presense in the school. This principal's retirement a year after merger with the closed school brought a new principal into his first full principalship.

Lack of support for improvement in school culture & district policy

Although the principal was solidly behind the PTA plans, his power to affect the motivation of some of the faculty was counterbalanced by the long-standing traditional culture of the school. Within this culture of highly experienced teachers, individual teacher autonomy was the predominant norm. There were almost no opportunities for teamwork and sharing prior to his initiative to establish grade level team planning, and this innovation initially met with considerable resistance. This condition of a prevalent school culture not conducive to inquiry and change may be typical of the situation faced by new principals: assignment to an existing school which

already has its established way of doing things. The school in this case was extreme in the stability of its faculty and leadership, which produced a strong culture extremely resistant to leadership from a newcomer, whatever his official position of authority.

His use of sanctions and incentives for change in the building were extremely limited. The existing culture could essentially wait him out and passively resist any initiatives for change without much fear of negative consequences. In fact passive resistance characterized many teachers' response to his leadership, as reported by the principal. He had difficulty getting teachers to volunteer to lead or serve on committees at the school. Although all teachers participated to some extent in the computer training, there were incidents of teachers resisting any attempt to require participation in training or scheduling them into the lab.

Summary of key events

The case itself concerns the process of implementing plans which a PTA board developed in support of the principal's efforts and parental concerns for school improvement. These plans included

1) an innovative teaching "mini-grants" program to award funds to teams of teachers to try out new practices,
2) a school-wide student awards program,
3) funds for hardware, software, training and support activities to continue implementing microcomputers into instruction,
4) continuation of an exploratory program suggested by the principal which had received the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Special Programs, and
5) opportunities to publicly recognize teachers through a Teacher Appreciation breakfast, a "Homecoming" celebration for former

teachers and students, and a retirement party.

The mini-grant provision sparked passive and then active resistance from members of the faculty, which was countered by the PTA board, principal and a "rebel" group of faculty who applied for a grant.

One year later, the results of this change effort were assessed through observations of the previous year's processes, and interviews with the principal, parent leaders, and faculty selected to represent the "rebels", onlookers, and "resistors" in their response to the mini-grant proposal.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Critical incidents described in observations and interviews were analyzed using research-based change variables to determine the extent to which those variables affected the process and results of each PTA-sponsored activity. The chart on the following page categorizes the change variables evident in seven of the PTA-sponsored change activities:

1) development of the 1985 PTA improvement plan
2) development of the 1986 PTA improvement plan
3) mini-grants (and field trips)
4) computer implementation (use in instruction)
5) school-wide student awards program
6) continuation of exploratory courses
7) teacher recognition activities (teacher appreciation breakfast, homecoming celebration, retirement party)

An "X" is used to indicate that this change variable was incorporated or highly relevant in the respective activity. A blank "-" indicates that the activity did not address or particularly concern that variable. A question mark "?" indicates lack of enough evidence to form a judgement. The

## ANALYSIS OF CHANGE VARIABLES RELEVANT TO PTA ACTIVITIES

| Change focus | Symbolism/ school culture | Power | Clarity proposed changes | Scope/tchr decision to participate | Collab. planning | Support activities | Train'g | Change Tchr practices | Efficacy | Teamwork/ School climate | Instrl Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| '85 plan development | X | X | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | X |
| '86 plan development | X | X | X | X | X | ? | - | - | X | X | X |
| Mini-grants field trips | X | X | - | - X | - X | - X | - | - X | - X | - X | X |
| Computer implementation | X | X | - X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Student awards | X | X | - X | - X | - X | - | - | ? | ? | ? | X |
| Exploratory courses | X | X | X | - X | - X | - | - | ? X | ? X | ? | X |
| Teacher recognition | X | - | ? | X | - | - | - | - | ? | - | X |





BEST COPY AVAILABLE

combination blank "-" and "X" indicates that initial processes failed to incorporate this variable but later activities successfully included it. A question mark "?" used with a blank "-" or "X" indicates some question as to whether the activity included or ignored this change variable.

Analysis of the patterns which emerged from charting the change variables operating in the seven activities indicated certain conclusions could be drawn about the process of effective change in this specific school environment. These conclusions are summarized below, and then separately examined with supporting examples of critical incidents.

1) Every PTA-initiated change effort involved symbolism, or school culture issues.

2) Every PTA-initiated change included visible, explicit support from the principal.

3) Every effort except teacher recognition began with power and control issues, and did not include high levels of collaborative planning in the beginning.

4) To the extent that each activity began to incorporate other change variables into the improvement process, particularly greater clarity about proposed changes and collaborative planning and decision making, teachers became more supportive and commited to the activity.

5) The computer implementation activity began similarly to the other projects described, but incorporated almost every important change variable during the year studied. It was only one of two activities (mini-grants and field trips) to directly affect teaching practices as well as conditions supporting further improvement in the school.

6) The sequence of change strategies observed, particularly the presense of political control issues and absense of collaboration at the beginning of most of the activities, may be explained by the

lack of conditions supporting school improvement. That is, without norms supporting improvement and parent involvement in that process, parents initially engaged in power struggles to get school improvement activities on the agenda as important.

1) Every PTA-initiated change effort involved symbolism, or school culture issues.

One significant way culture influences behavior in organizations may be phrased as "the way we do things around here" (Deal and Kennedy, 1984). The case analysis reveals conflicts between the established school culture represented by the "old guard" teachers, and new meanings, symbols and traditions proposed by the parents, principal, and "rebel faculty". Parent leaders and the principal explicitly considered this conflict in values as they attempted to identify common values among parents and teachers which could help "transform" the old culture.

However, conflicts were inevitable in the differing meanings attached to events by the two groups, the "old guard" and the parent-principal-rebel teachers allied for school improvement. The increased parent involvement in decision-making brought about by the new principal was normal and expected for parents who had been highly involved in other PTA organizations. Given the history of this schoool in excluding parents, that increased visibility and participation could have signaled other meanings to the traditional teachers, such as loss of control and autonomy.

The vigorous opposition to the mini-grants can partially be understood as a reaction to a concept of parent involvement that was entirely new to many of the faculty. No wonder many teachers privately muttered (as reported in interviews), "Just who do these parents think they are trying to tell us how to spend money we helped raise?" Consequently a plan designed

to encourage individual and group creativity and initiative was seen by many teachers as an attempt to control them and pit teachers against each other. Teachers claimed that the plan would encourage competition among teachers which they compared to the "Master Teacher Plan" then being implemented by the state (which they also opposed).

The use of computers probably carried significantly different meaning for some parents and teachers. Parent requests on the survey for "more use of computers" (without further explanation of how computers should be used) indicated that for some parents, computer use symbolized better, more modern education and keeping up with the times. This attitude also seemed evident in parent comments during fund raising efforts, that we needed more money to buy computers. Parents also expressed concerns that their children were not getting to use the computers, indicating their belief that computer use would help their children learn, and that they expected teachers to use them in instruction. For some teachers who learned enough about their instructional uses, computers could have represented their efforts to better meet children's needs. Other teachers could have seen them as another example of a "fad" pushed on them by the public, with no benefit instructionally for children.

PTA leaders explicitly used the student awards and teacher recognition programs to express and celebrate values regarding teaching and learning. Parents had clearly expressed in the survey their desire for their children to be recognized and feel successful for their achievements. Teachers interviewed about the awards program differed as to whether they used the awards in the classroom to encourage children. They all agreed, however, that the awards program "meant a lot to the parents", and was therefore a valuable activity.

PTA leaders used public ceremonies to recognize and celebrate the

importance of good teaching. The "rebels" were annointed publicly by parents as new heroines when the award of the first mini-grant was announced publicly at the second PTA meeting. Hoping to reawaken shared values among teachers and parents, the PTA organized a "homecoming" and invited former students and teachers to speak about what school and good teachers had meant to them. Parent leaders were invited to participate in, and contributed flowers and other gifts to, a retirement party for four teachers, where the history and contributions of the teachers and the school were celebrated.

The direct impact of these activites on change in the school is difficult to assess. When asked directly, teachers did not report any special feeling of being appreciated or recognized from specific activities such as homecoming or teacher appreciation day. Results such as greater teamwork among teachers and willingness to try out new teaching approaches are indicators of changes in the school culture supportive of further improvement. These changes are probably due to a multitude of influences, including the other factors identified in the analysis. A symbolic approach to implementing change considers the meaning which members of a culture attach to these events and to proposed change.

One way of assessing the development of a strong school culture supportive of change is to ask teachers what the school stands for, and consider whether their answers indicate the development of a shared sense of mission supportive of improvement. When teachers were asked this question in the interview, the "resistors" and "on lookers" talked about the importance of recognizing children as individuals, of doing one's best to help meet that child's needs both educationally and socially. One teacher told a story about neglected children who depended upon the school staff for much more than just academic achievement. Others talked about the

importance of helping children learn to the best of their potential wherever they may start.

These expressions of mission were consistent with themes which the principal had been emphasizing since his arrival, especially the importance of caring for children as individuals. With the faculty he had determined that the school was doing a pretty good job of meeting the academic needs of children in the middle, but not of meeting the needs of children at either extreme. These themes also fit with parents' requests that teachers look for ways to help children experience more success. To the extent that these expressions of mission were be translated into instruction that took these diverse needs into account, the culture could be said to be having an impact on school improvement.

The "rebel" faculty expressed a slightly different sense of mission which highlighted both their hopes for the school and the reality of not yet being there. They expressed that the school was about "everyone helping everyone else do the very best s/he can achieve." They talked about how they felt this applied to teachers helping teachers, but admitted that not everyone in the building felt this way. This sense of a shared responsibility for achieving instructional excellence helps explain why joining with colleagues to try out new approaches to teaching seemed the most natural thing in the world to this team, while other teachers had no idea of what practices they might try out together. There is evidence that more faculty are beginning to perceive the value of working with colleagues. Teachers protested loudly when their joing planning periods were lost recently, and there is more evidence of joint planning in some of the instruction and field trips planned by grade level teams. The mission envisioned by the "rebels" is clearly consistent with the conditions cited in the literature for effective school improvement: an atmosphere within the

school of collegiality, norms for improvement, and a shared esprit de corps that says this is a good place to work.

2) Every PTA-initiated change included visible, explicit support from the principal.

This observation is consistent with the emphasis in the entire literature on school improvement and school effectiveness, in which changes which were not supported by the principal had little hope of long-term implementation. The principal in this case had already experienced difficult opposition from teachers in implementing school-wide reading groups and grade-level team meetings. Despite this initial opposition, he persevered in implementing these practices, and eventually gained support from most teachers as they experienced the benefits of these changes. From the moment he was assigned as principal of the school, he demonstrated his belief in the value of strong parent involvement by involving parents in significant decision-making groups and welcoming their input.

When parent leaders felt discouraged about lack of enthusiasm or even opposition from some teachers, they could usually count on support and encouragement from the principal. These parents concluded early that given opposition from many teachers regarding changes parents wanted, their ideas would have no hope of being implemented without the principal. In effect, parents seeking improvement in the school allied themselves with the principal, who also had a compatible agenda for improvement. Their coalition succeeded in getting proposed changes past the stage of initial opposition, as discussed in the next session.

3) Every effort except teacher recognition began with power and control issues, and did not include high levels of collaborative planning in the beginning.

In contrast to the literature on effective change, none of the activities described in the case began with high levels of teacher participation and collaboration. Teachers and parents were both involved in groups which planned these changes, but teacher participation tended to be limited to one or two representatives. Often the "rebels" were over-represented in these groups and criticized by other teachers with the comment "how come the same people always get to decide everything?" Yet the principal repeatedly reported difficulty in getting teachers other than the "rebels" to volunteer for committee assignments.

This pattern of "passive resistance" also characterized teachers' responses to changes proposed by parents. The process of developing PTA plans for the coming school board illustrates the power and control issues evident in the beginning of parent initiated change efforts.

At a meeting with the newly elected board before the end of the school year, teachers were asked for their ideas regarding the use of PTA funds. Several teachers commented that both ditto machines were becoming worn, and thought the PTA might help repair them, at a cost of $1000-$2000. Others said that they appreciated the funds (approximately $ 50 per teacher) that the PTA gave each of them to use in their classroom as they saw fit, and hoped the practice would continue. They mentioned that the amount only partially compensated money they were already spending on their own for instructional supplies. Another teacher reported the cafeteria workers had requested we help them purchase an ice machine, since PTA functions often required a large amount of ice. Another teacher wondered if we could do something about getting teachers paid to come in and work in their rooms the day before school opened, the way it used to be. There were a few comments about computers, mainly that we should carefully assess the use being made of the ones we had before purchasing any more.

These comments were interpreted by parent board members to mean that teachers had very few creative ideas as to how the PTA might support improvements in instruction. The lack of teachers' comments concerning instructional improvement reinforced parents' perception that most faculty did not see instructional improvement as a priority in the school. Several board members including myself were adamantly opposed to repairing the ditto machines as long as "the purple passion", a perjorative term referring to the overuse of dittos for instruction, reigned unchecked in the school. Along with the principal, we felt that dittos were being extremely overused as an instructional technique, and that the school system should be primarily responsible for repair to standard equipment. There was a perception among parent leaders, later supported by the survey results, that few teachers in the build were developing alternative instructional strategies to reach and motivate the full range of children in their classrooms. Overall we felt like the teachers had really not given us any creative or thoughtful ideas of how our fund-raising efforts could help improve instruction in the school.

Parents' expressed concerns for school improvement were apparently not perceived as priorities by most of the faculty. The faculty did not initiate a plan for school improvement on its own before the PTA plan was developed. The principal had reported resistance from many teachers to other changes he had initiated. Parents were aware of slow progress and the resistance of some teachers to utilizing the PTA-provided microcomputers in instruction. They were also aware of individual teacher opposition to the alternative exploratory program and to the PTA "Fall Festival" fund-raiser. Awareness of parents' concerns was not evident in teachers' requests for PTA funding support.

These observations support the hypothesis that the predominant school culture did not support norms of improvement. The lack of teacher initiative to try out new teaching practices, or responsiveness to parent concerns expressed in the survey that children were not being motivated or challenged, indicated to parents that teachers preferred the "status quo." This expectation conflicted with parent expectations for improvement, and resulted in unilateral initiatives by parents to encourage new teaching methods, evident in the mini-grants and computer programs. Both of these programs sparked initial opposition from teachers, but gradually became institutionalized and promoted experimentation with new instructional approaches.

The political perspective in the case analysis suggests that under adverse conditions, school improvement may depend upon parents and their allies developing and using enough power to get "improvement" on the agenda of the school. This strategy carries risks, in that initial teacher participation in these initiatives was low. It is quite possible that parents could have increased teacher participation and commitment in these new programs by providing more opportunities for collaborative planning of how to implement them. Parent leaders thought they were providing these opportunities for collaborative planning, but often they really only existed for the two faculty representatives on the PTA board. Parents were more successful in gaining teacher collaboration in subsequent planning for computers and mini-grants. However, it is also quite possible that the possibilities for collaboration are lower when the political issue of whether an innovation will be tried is being fought.

4) To the extent that each activity began to find ways to incorporate other variables into the change process, particularly greater clarity about proposed changes and collaborative planning and decision making, teachers

became more supportive and commited to the activity.

This kind of progression and results was particularly evident in the implementation of microcomputers into instruction.

5) The computer implementation activity began similarly to the other projects described, but incorporated almost every important change variable during the year studied. It was only one of two activities (mini-grants and field trips) to directly affect teaching practices as well as conditions supporting further improvement in the school.

The program began in much the same environment as the other parent efforts, with low numbers of teachers implementing computers into regular instruction. There was considerable teacher opposition initially to parents' expectations that every teacher become trained. There was also opposition expressed to the mandatory computer lab times scheduled by the principal.

After two years computer use in the school was varied, from frequent use by a few teachers to none by others. Some parents were upset by the slow progress and lack of opportunity for their children to use computers which their fund-raising efforts had helped purchase. Teachers also reported equipment problems with the lab arrangement which frequently wasted instructional time in the lab.

A parent volunteer experienced in computers guided the work of a computer committee during the year. She personally provided additional training to interested teachers. She also recruited the teachers most active in computer use for the committee. The committee conducted interviews with the rest of the faculty to determine how computers could be used more effectively in the school for instruction. The committee identified continuing problems with equipment, lack of teachers' familiarity

with available software, and lack of software organized to correlate with the curriculum. The committee recommended removing the computers from a lab setup and furnishing a computer for every teacher who wanted one in her room. They also recommended funding a teacher workshop to evaluate and organize the available software to correlate with curriculum objectives. All of these recommendations were approved and implemented by the PTA. At the end of the school year the parent chairing this committee was voted an honorary life membership in the PTA by the faculty.

By the beginning of the next school year every teacher except two in the building had requested a computer for her room. Over 80% of the software had been evaluated and organized into a library check-out system. Every teacher had been personally instructed in using the computer and had received a personal disk of starter programs. A teacher's aide had also been trained and was available part-time to provide technical assistance to teachers.

The change processes and results evident in this activity were dramatically different from the change efforts analyzed thus far. Computer use in the school had initially been introduced as a top-down change similar to the other change efforts. After some slow progress with this change, a parent volunteer increased the opportunities for teachers to collaborate in planning and deciding how computers would be used in the school. These opportunities were accompanied by increased training opportunities, including training support activities such as in-classroom technical assistance and workshops where successes and problems could be mutually solved. In turn, these opportunities created greater clarity and specificity about the desired change--how to use computers to support instruction. The same teachers who applied for the mini-grants and who had already demonstrated norms of collegiality and teamwork took the lead in the

computer committee. The final results--teacher commitment to and ownership of the change, project implementation, and changes in teacher instructional behavior--are entirely consistent with the literature reviewed on successful school improvement strategies.

6) The sequence of change strategies observed, particularly the presense of political control issues and absense of collaboration at the beginning of most of the activities, may be explained by the lack of conditions supporting school improvement. That is, without norms supporting improvement and parent involvement in that process, parents initially engaged in power struggles to get school improvement activities on the agenda as important.

This assertion is not to say that the effectiveness of the proposed changes could not have been improved by increasing opportunities for teacher collaboration in planning. Many teachers claimed that they had not applied for a mini-grant becuase they really had not understood what the parents expected, and were somewhat worried about the written, formal requirement of applying for a grant. Obviously the example given by the "rebels" helped other teachers gain a clearer picture of how they could use field trips to support instruction. The process of collaboration would have assisted in clarifying these expectations, as well as giving teachers ownership of the proposed change.

But one reason more opportunities for collaboration were not provided was the perception among parents that many teachers were opposed to any proposed change. The parents' strategy of initiating proposals unilaterally has modified this year, with much more teacher input being sought in the development of PTA plans. There are still incidents which illustrate the unresolved conflicts between parents and teachers regarding who will decide

what is important. The new PTA board recently refused to fund teachers' requests for additional color TV's because the instructional value of this equipment was not evident in the teachers' requests. Subsequent conversations have included more explicit plans for how the equipment will be used instructionally. Such use of power breeds resentment. Even one of the "rebel" teachers asserted that teachers should be allowed to spend the money as their individual professional judgment dictates. But parents are not willing to negotiate away their right to get their concerns on the table by controlling how PTA funds will be spent.

Summary of Results:

Parent involvement in school improvement efforts can be seen as a specific, unique case of school change efforts in general. The literature on school improvement deals almost exclusively with change planned and implemented by combinations of school site and district administrators, outside political forces, and teachers. It does not explain how parent involvement might affect the focus and process of school improvement. Factors found through research to predict successful school improvement were used to analyze this specific case of parent efforts to help change a school. These principles of effective school change were both confirmed and expanded by the analysis to account for the unique circumstances faced by parents in attempting to help change schools. Following is a summary of five conclusions regarding effective parent involvement in school improvement supported by the case analysis:

1) **Parents usually lack the power to directly affect school improvement.** The school and district conditions under which parents can help change schools are rare and difficult to achieve. The scarcity of such conditions may help explain the lack of research to support the effect

of organized parents on school improvement.

2) **Parents can increase their power to make school improvement a priority by becoming allies with professionals within the school system who advocate school improvement.**

3) **Expert knowledge of school effectiveness and school improvement can make parent-supported change efforts more effective and give parents and their allies more power to make school improvement a priority.** Organized parents (as well as their professional allies) often lack expert knowledge to decide what changes are needed and how to implement those changes. However, the experience of attempting to initiate school change can generate more expert knowledge and thus more power to influence schools, which can make later change efforts more effective.

4) **Organized parents can help schools improve demonstrably, especially when their efforts focus on creating conditions in the local school which will encourage continual improvement as an ongoing school norm and process.** These conditions are the factors identified in the literature on school improvement, and include:

    a) encouraging teacher commitment to proposed changes through increasing opportunities for collaborative planning and decision-making;

    b) proposing specific, research-supported changes;

    c) providing support for activities which encourage "teamwork" (collegiality), the development of problem-solving capacities, and "mutual adaptation" of proposed changes; and

    d) supporting the principal's role as instructional leader.

Because organized parents may first need to create an awareness of the need for change, their initial efforts may have a greater impact on

the conditions required for further school improvement than on student achievement or teaching practices.

5) **Given public interest and lack of consensus about the goals and processes of effective schooling, more effective structures and processes need to be developed for including parents as allies in school improvement.** Lack of these explicit structures and processes may lead to destructive and ultimately ineffective battles over school control, rather than collaborative participation in school improvement.

Each of these five conclusions is discussed more fully in the respective sections below.

1) **Parents usually lack the power to directly affect school improvement.** Parents usually cannot "require" the implementation of changes they want except in extreme circumstances, ie., abuse of children or extreme instructional failure. Even if they possessed the power to unilaterally demand certain improvements, the literature on school improvement would suggest that persuading teachers to commit themselves to proposed changes is essential to long-term successful change.

Parents' power to persuade school staff to implement proposed changes is limited by conditions in the school and district. The most important conditions include:

a) the existing culture of the school,

b) the leadership of the school principal,

c) the district's organizational requirements and incentives for continuing school improvement, and

d) the expert knowledge available to parents concerning how to effectively improve schools.

Barriers in the school culture to parent power for influencing school improvement were clearly identified in the literature reviewed earlier. ZZZ identified five typical barriers to greater parent influence on schools. Peterson ( ) showed that parent social status affected principal style, which may make school improvement initiated through the principal more possible and likely in higher SES parent populations. The tendency for strong culture organizations to become self-serving and ultimately fail is countered by their commitment to stay close to their customers (Peters and Waterman, 19xx). However, the direct "customers" of schools--their students--are relatively powerless to motivate change in comparison to businesses' concern to keep their customers. As indirect clients, parents' dissatisfactions with schools have a less direct and less immediate impact on the short term survival of schools than does the loss of customers.

In the case presented, many parents wanted the school to change. Some parents expressed their desire for school improvement through the priorities and plans developed by the PTA board. These plans were supported by parents' responses to a PTA survey, and by supporting the budget and its associated fund-raising efforts. The proposed change effort was also consistent with, and supported by, the principal's efforts to improve the school.

However, parents lacked the power to persuade most faculty to implement these proposed changes. There were no observable negative consequences for teachers who ignored parents' desires for school improvement, beyond negative parent feelings. Apparently the past history of the school and the current teacher culture supported minimal involvement of parents in shaping the instructional priorities of the school.

The principal himself did not always have enough power to insist that teachers implement proposed changes. It was already evident from the examples given by the principal that many individual teachers had already resisted some

of his initiatives for change with no evident consequences. Some of these initiatives, such as school-wide grouping for reading instruction and grade-level meetings, had enough faculty support and principal administrative power behind them to be implemented. Other initiatives, such as gaining more teacher participation in administration of the school, resulted in "the same few teachers" volunteering for these duties.

There were no apparent district incentives or consequences for participating in a school improvement project or changing school practices to respond to parent concerns. While the school was held accountable for implementing required curricula and student achievement of minimum basic skills levels, there were no administrative mechanisms for requiring an explicit school mission or annual improvement plan. Consequently, there were no visible requirements, structures or processes to demonstrate district support for parent involvement in improving the school.

Finally, parents (and their professional allies) did not know exactly how to go about implementing change in the school. Although parents had reached some consensus about the changes they believed needed to be made to improve the school, there was little explicit communication of research-based "expert knowledge" to the faculty to support these proposed changes. Parents were not explicit in the changes that were proposed, so that some teachers had difficulty envisioning how they would implement them. Even more important, parents did not know how to go about persuading teachers to commit themselves to the proposed changes and to the overall goal of thinking about ways to improve instruction and learning in the school.

**2) Parents can increase their power to make school improvement a priority by becoming allies with professionals within the school system who advocate school improvement.** The apparent lack of faculty responsiveness and even

resistance to the concerns expressed by parents posed a problem to the parent leadership: how to get teachers to support and implement change efforts. Given the strong school culture resistant to change, and lack of more expert knowledge regarding effective school change, the parent leadership pursued strategies to gain more power to effect school improvement. Initial strategies included continued support for the principal's efforts to improve the school, and continuation of the mini-grants plan and funding despite lack of faculty support for the proposal. The principal's involvement and support of the proposed improvement strategies from the start lent a weight of authority to the proposals which they would not have had coming from parents alone. At the same time his power with the teachers increased to the degree that he was able to demonstrate organized parent support for his efforts. The board's refusal to back down from the improvement goals in the mini-grants despite teacher opposition continued to allocate scare resources (funding) to those goals. Funding the proposal submitted by the "rebels" and recognizing them publicly as heroines added to parents' power to demonstrate the value of the proposals.

**3) Expert knowledge of school effectiveness and school improvement can make parent-supported change efforts more effective and give parents and their allies more power to make school improvement a priority.** The PTA plan was developed from goals for school improvement expressed by the principal and parents. Some of the particular strategies, such as creating a school-wide awards program, were based on research on factors affecting student achievement. Research indicating the importance of school culture supported PTA involvement in developing ceremonies to recognize student and faculty achievement and promote the values of the school.

However, other strategies such as the mini-grants and teacher recognition plans were not based on specific research based strategies of how to encourage

teacher innovativeness and efforts to improve instruction. Parents lacked specific knowledge of the change process, particularly the need to build continuous opportunities for communication, collaboration and shared decision making into the planning and implementation process. Lack of this knowledge contributed to a lack of specific goals for improvement and missed opportunities for developing wider participation in and commitment to the proposed changes.

Parents did begin to learn and apply knowledge of the change process in subsequent improvement efforts, with improved faculty participation and commitment. Teachers were surveyed and involved repeatedly in planning for further computer use, and the PTA funded team efforts to evaluate and organize software. These efforts resulted in much greater utilization of the computers by teachers for instruction. Teachers were individually asked for their priorities for PTA funding, and perhaps influenced by the example and enthusiastic support of the "rebels" for the idea, approved the inclusion of mini-grants in the next year's PTA budget. The student awards committee asked teachers to evaluate the program and invited them to select the award categories, which may have strengthened teacher commitment to the program. These efforts were not the result of studying research findings but of parent leaders initiating processes they felt would better build teacher commitment. However, the apparent success of these strategies demonstrates how parents' use of these research-based change processes increased the effectiveness of their change efforts.

**4) Organized parents can help schools improve demonstrably, especially when their efforts focus on creating conditions in the local school which will encourage continual improvement as an ongoing school norm and process.** Organized parent efforts to help the school improve did result indirectly in

some demonstrable accomplishments, as follows:

the continuation of the mini-grants,

innovations in teaching practice such as greater use of field trips for instructional purposes and alternative, more motivating assignments,

greater utilization of microcomputers for instruction, and

a school wide student awards program.

Parent efforts also contributed indirectly to a norm encouraging teamwork, as at least one new team planned fieldtrips and a mini-grant proposal together, and all teachers protested the loss of team planning time. Parents may have also contributed indirectly to a norm of school improvement, by demonstrating publicly through ceremonies, planning and budgeting their support of teachers in general and innovative leaders in particular.

**5) Given public interest and lack of consensus about the goals and processes of effective schooling, more effective structures and processes need to be developed for including parents as allies in school improvement.** The difficulty parents had in developing an equitable mini-grants awards procedure, and the controversy and opposition which the whole process created, demonstrates the importance and difficulty of developing structures and processes for resolving parent-teacher differences in "what is important in school". On the one hand the analysis showed that even supportive teachers tended to deny the legitimacy of parent claims on how funds should be spent for school improvement. Their definition of professionalism led to a view that all teachers should be able to decide what is valuable on their own, and parents should contribute the resources for these self-selected improvements without strings. Such a unilateral definition of how to decide what is important reverts back to former definitions of parent involvement: raise the money for what teachers say is important, but don't try to tell them how to spend it.

Such a proposal denies the role parents want to play in determining how schools should improve.

On the other hand some parents perceive their growing power as giving them the right to dictate change to the school. Even if such a strategy could work in the short run, it would ultimately fail because it does not help build the capacity in the school to collaboratively identify problems and propose solutions which will improve the school. The literature on school improvement clearly indicates that such top down strategies do not result in long term continuation of improvement projects.

What is needed are structures and processes for enabling parents, faculties and administrators to work collaboratively on school improvement projects. This collaboration helps build a shared mission and norm of improvement which goes far beyond specific proposed changes. Rather it helps encourage all participants in the school to look for ways to improve. Collaboration also helps fine tune and mutually adjust change efforts so that innovation can be successfully implemented and maintained.

**Conclusion:** Organized parents can be effective in supporting school improvement. Their usual powerlessness to effect school improvement can be counteracted by strategies to increase their expert and referent power. That is, they can learn and communicate what is known about effective schools and the processes of school improvement. They can also form alliances with professionals commited to school improvement.

The results of this case analysis suggest that organized parents' efforts to improve schools will be more effective and long-lasting when they are based on expert knowledge of school effectiveness and improvement. This literature suggests that parents need to think beyond the specifics of their concerns or any one specific improvement goal. Instead they need to use the resources and

processes at their disposal to help create the conditions which will foster school improvement as an ongoing, normal process in the school. Creating these conditions involves providing opportunities for faculty and administrators to develop their teamwork skills, establishing norms of collegiality and continual improvement. Parents can strategically use change processes to help build collaboration, shared decision-making and shared norms to support continual improvement. Their explicit and visible support of innovative administrators and faculty annoints these persons as heroes and heroines, increasing their influence in shaping the learning and commitment of others in the school organization.

Finally, parents, teachers and administrators trying to implement school improvement as allies need to remember that change is long-term, non-linear and heuristic. There is no "cookbook recipe" which will guarantee results, only guidelines which can help direct their efforts and avoid obvious pitfalls. There is a need for creative structures and processes which can involve all aspects of the school community in school improvement, rather than destructive attempts by power groups to control the school. The case described here provides hope that parents and their allies can learn from experience to implement change better, in ways that will provide long-term improvements in instruction. Fundamentally effective change must build individual commitment to personal improvement efforts. Hopefully parents can become more effective in their efforts to help create conditions necessary for schools to improve.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bolman, Lee G. and Deal, Terrence E. (1984). Modern approaches to understanding and managing organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Courter, R. Linden, and Ward, Beatrice A. (1983). Staff development for school improvement. Staff Development, Gary A. Griffin ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Deal, Terrence (1985). The symbolism of effective schools. The Elementary School Journal, 85(5), 601-620.

Deal, Terrence E., and Kennedy, Allen A. (1984). Corporate cultures: the rites and rituals of corporate life. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Doyle, W., and Ponder, G. (1977). The practicality ethic and teacher decision-making. Interchange, 8, 1-12.

Fruchter, Norm (1984). The role of parent participation. Social policy, 15(2), 32-36.

Fullan, Michael (1985). Change processes and strategies at the local level. The Elementary School Journal, 85(3).

Hall, Gene, and Loucks, Susan (1979). Teacher concerns as a basis for facilitating and personalizing staff development. Staff development: new demands, new realities, new perspectives, Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller eds., New York: Teachers College Press.

Hawley, Willis D., and Rosenholtz, Susan (1983). Good schools: what research says about improving student achievement. The Peabody Journal of Education, 61(4).

Little, Joyce W. (1981). School success and staff development: the role of staff development in urban desegregated schools, executive summary. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education.

McLaughlin, Milbry W. and March, David D. (1979). Staff development and school change. Staff development: new demands, new realities, new perspectives, Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller eds., New York: Teachers College Press.

Purkey, Stewart, and Smith, M. S. (1985). School reform: the policy implications of the effective schools literature, volume I: district policies (contract no. 400-79-0035). Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education.

Sparks, Georgea M. (1983). Synthesis of research on staff development for effective teaching. Educational Leadership, 65-72.